

Twelve Tips for Parents:

How to Use *Put Your Worries Here* to Help Your Teen

by Lisa M. Schab, LCSW

All teens experience anxiety sometimes, whether it's the typical nervousness that shows up before a test or a date, or the full-blown panic attack that accompanies an anxiety disorder. The guided journal *Put Your Worries Here* provides a tool for all teens to reduce and release anxiety *in the moment*. It's been carefully designed to be effective both for teens working with professionals (like counselors or psychotherapists) and for teens on their own.

As the parent of an adolescent, you have the challenge of helping your teen develop increasing independence, *while* keeping them safe and healthy as they do that. *Put Your Worries Here* can help your child develop a critical aspect of their independence by increasing their skills in managing their own emotional health.

The following tips offer information and guidance for appropriate use of this book.

1. Since adolescent development involves more physical, emotional, and cognitive change than any other stage of life, it's normal for *any child* in this age group to experience anxiety, making this book a helpful tool for just about every teen.

2. If your teen is working with a counselor for anxiety management, this book can help in that process. It offers evidence-based ways teens can practice reducing their anxiety, and it can be a source of relief and help between formal sessions. Because of the journal's lighthearted format, it offers a break from traditional talk therapy, which can feel heavier.
3. If your child needs guidance with anxiety management but is resistant to professional help, the book provides a teen-friendly introduction to anxiety reduction skills. Its nontraditional, creative approach also helps reduce the stigma around the subject of mental and emotional health.
4. Some teens are actually interested in increasing their self-awareness and practicing self-help. This is great! This book makes a good gift for kids curious about mental and emotional self-care.
5. Teen anxiety levels can increase before certain events—like an oral presentation, an important social situation, a competition, or a new experience. At such times, remind your teen to try using this book. It's a ready, convenient tool for reducing their anxiety in the moment.
6. Your teen may have a low baseline level of anxiety (which means they experience less anxiety than the average adolescent). Inevitably, however, the

time comes when life presents a challenge and your child will face the feeling of anxiety. Using this book as a form of preventive training (practicing anxiety reduction before an anxiety-provoking challenge arises) will make a teen more ready to manage anxiety in a healthy way when it does occur.

7. If your teen is one who resists talking about feelings, this book can be used to open the topic. Presenting it with a comment like “I thought this looked kind of fun” or “I know you don’t like talking about this stuff, but maybe you could give this a try” can open the conversation. At the very least, it will put a helpful tool into their hands, even if they don’t share their thoughts and feelings with you.
8. It’s not uncommon for teens to reject their parents’ suggestions, but then turn around and accept the same advice from another source. This book can provide that other nonparental source of help for managing anxiety. It gives the teen an arena for learning about and practicing anxiety management without feeling they’re being preached to.
9. Some teens are more open about their feelings, and can even tolerate working on anxiety reduction *with* you. If they’re receptive, you can try completing the prompts in this book together—either by both of you working to complete the same prompt, or by working side by side and then sharing your results.

10. If more than one family member needs help with anxiety—and if they're receptive—prompts can be worked on as a family activity. (Don't feel bad if your teen will have nothing to do with this idea! There are some teens who will be okay with it, but probably more who will not.)

11. If your teen shares with you any part of what they've expressed in this journal, do your very best to listen and receive it *without judgment*. Criticizing their expressions will generally close off this crucial communication, while acceptance can keep that channel open.

12. Use the journal yourself! Yes, it's geared for teens, but it actually works for anyone who wants to reduce their anxiety. One of the best things we can do for our kids is to be healthy ourselves. And working prompts designed with a teen flavor with an open mind can help you remember what it felt like to be in the throes of adolescence. It might help you empathize more with your own teen.